CHAPTER XV

ECONOMIC LIFE AND ORGANIZATION

FOOD, clothing, and shelter have loomed large in the objectives of the Chinese. This, of course, is of necessity true in any society. Rather more than most peoples, however, the Chinese have been this-worldly in their ideals. In a certain sense they can be characterized as materialistically minded. Certainly interest in the physical basis of life has been prominent in the philosophies on which the state has acted. As far back as we can trace Chinese culture, it was consciously dependent upon agriculture and sought to further it. Host of the great schools of thought of the Chou endeavored to promote man's bodily welfare as an essential condition of all gains in morals and the arts. The Legalists, on whose theories Ch'in Shin Huang Ti unified the Empire, stressed the economic organization of society. Confucianism recognized the fact that if there were to be civilization the masses must not be allowed to go unclad and hungry. Of the native philosophies accorded a prolonged place of honor in Chinese life, only Taoism belittled the striving for bodily comforts and sought to make man independent of the trammels of the flesh.

In this respect, it may be noted, China differed fundamentally from India. However much in practice the great majority of the Hindus have been engrossed in the straggle to maintain their physical existence, usually in theory they have sought to free themselves from it, have honored the ascetic, and

have tended to regard this present, visible world as an illusion. It may also be remarked that for this reason the Chinese have fitted more easily into the climate of opinion of the modem Occident than have the Indians. The difference is seen in tbe two men who in the twentieth century have most aroused the enthusiastic loyalty of their respective peoples. On the one hand has been Gandhi, ascetic and wishing to save his people from Western industrialism. On